

Opening Statement
Chairman Michael G. Oxley
Committee on Financial Services

Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity
“Promoting the American Dream of Homeownership through
Downpayment Assistance”

Tuesday, April 8, 2003

Today, we are here to discuss the Administration’s proposed American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI), and legislation introduced by Representatives Harris and Rogers that would implement the program.

As part of President Bush’s initiative to encourage homeownership, particularly among minority populations, the American Dream Downpayment Initiative will help more Americans buy their first homes. In addition to the tremendous benefit and sense of satisfaction thousands of families will have by owning their own homes, this legislation will also strengthen communities by increasing the number of stakeholders in neighborhoods across the country. In fact, this initiative will help over 40,000 families become first-time homeowners. This bill was carefully crafted to assist local governments with downpayment assistance while preserving flexibility to be responsive to the needs of their communities.

Many State and local governments currently have downpayment assistance programs that utilize federally funded social service programs, but the extent of their involvement and their ability to fulfill their mission will be enhanced by the American Dream Downpayment Initiative. We should do everything we can to help close the gap between minority and non-minority homeownership, especially because the downpayment is one of the most significant barriers to homeownership. There are many hard working, low income families who would greatly benefit from the wealth-building opportunity that homeownership can afford.

Many of our witnesses today are part of the local communities that assist low-income families with the home-buying process. We are anxious to hear from you today on how best to assist you in addressing those needs. I am also looking forward to hearing from Secretary Martinez and the other witnesses to gain their perspective on the American Dream Downpayment Initiative. I’d like to thank Katherine Harris and Mike Rogers for their hard work on this legislation and look forward to the testimony.

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